

UNIQUE & DISTINCT
INTERDISCIPLINARY
UNIVERSITY

PROSPECTUS

DOCTORAL PROGRAMME

ACADEMIC YEAR 2026-27

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UNIVERSITY

PROSPECTUS

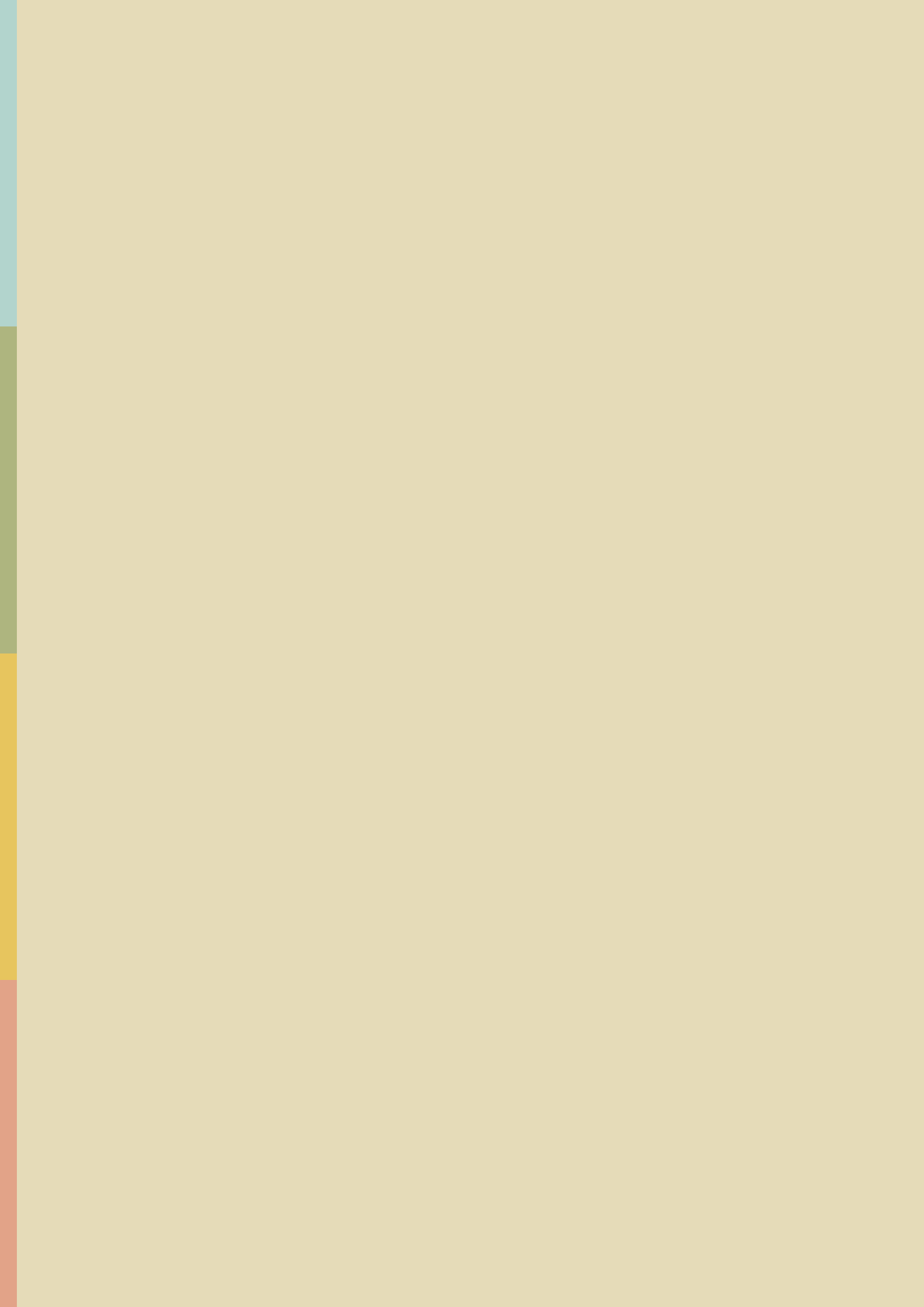
DOCTORAL PROGRAMME

ACADEMIC YEAR 2026-27



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PROSPECTUS – DOCTORAL PROGRAMME ACADEMIC YEAR 2026 – 27

The IIHS (Institution Deemed to be) University is recognised by UGC under Section 3 of the UGC Act 1956 and notified under the Distinct category of the UGC (Institutions Deemed to be Universities) Regulations 2023. The University is offering a set of transformative new interdisciplinary academic degree programmes, i.e. five Master's programmes and a Doctoral Programme, centred around urban research and practice. This is in consonance with the specified nomenclature of degrees as per Section 22 of the UGC Act.

As India undergoes the largest rural-to-urban transition in human history, urbanisation is fundamentally reshaping its economy, society, culture and environment. Recognising this defining moment, the University is premised on the need to **transform the current nature of urban education** as one of the most important drivers for India's national development and sustainable global futures. It addresses this transition by:

- Undertaking **interdisciplinary teaching and applied research** to help build new national and global knowledge; and
- Training a new generation of urban practitioners through the delivery of a set of **transformative interdisciplinary academic degree programmes**.

Aligned with the vision and approach of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the University takes the process of urbanisation as the core of a new **interdisciplinary knowledge paradigm**, by incorporating teaching and applied research into a continuous learning ecosystem.

This **unique, inclusive, and interdisciplinary** University is rooted in the plurality of cultures, languages, and scholarship of India and the Global South, while drawing from comparative lessons across the world. It stands out for its **interdisciplinary** approach to teaching and research, **globally benchmarked curricula**, and **innovative pedagogical methods**.

The University continues to work towards creating India-centric knowledge and applied research on various aspects of a changing India, aimed at the **equitable, sustainable, and efficient transformation of Indian settlements**.



CHANCELLOR'S MESSAGE



It gives me great pleasure to invite applications to the Doctoral degree programme of the IIHS (Institution Deemed to be) University for the academic year 2026-27. This is a cutting-edge interdisciplinary degree designed to educate the next generation of India's thought leaders, practitioners and scholars on the challenges and opportunities of India's urbanisation.

India's urban transition requires a fundamental reassessment of our development trajectory along multiple fronts: governance, policy, finance, infrastructure, environment and institutional capacity. Traditional approaches have proved insufficient to understand and address the complexity of these interconnected challenges.

The IIHS University's unique academic curriculum is designed to serve as a model for interdisciplinary and India-centric knowledge focused on sustainable urbanisation. This is a world-class programme designed to equip students with the necessary knowledge, perspectives and skills to deal with the complexity of India's development challenges.

The University fills a crucial gap in demonstrating how new knowledge institutions can fulfil the mandate of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. As a distinct university focused on a strategic area of national importance, the IIHS University invites prospective students to explore and apply for these programmes.

May the sky be your limit!

Dr. Vijay L. Kelkar, FNAE
Chancellor
Padma Vibhushan



VICE-CHANCELLOR'S MESSAGE



The IIHS (Institution Deemed to be) University is a significant innovation in the Indian higher education system drawing upon the frame of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. We successfully launched our interdisciplinary Doctoral Programme in the academic year 2025-2026.

IIHS University now invites applications to its interdisciplinary Doctoral Programme for the academic year 2026-2027 as outlined in this prospectus. Highlights of this programme, include:

- **Integration of STEM and science-based knowledge with multi/ inter-disciplinary perspectives in the Social Sciences and Humanities:** This is done via a curriculum that brings together broad-based, interdisciplinary education with specialised sectoral knowledge. This draws from across the STEM disciplines, social sciences, arts and humanities, natural and environmental and ecological sciences, as well as emerging interdisciplinary fields such as urban science, sustainability science, and climate science.
- **Innovative Curriculum, Course Structures, and Pedagogical Methods:** The University's curriculum is designed to overcome the separation of 'theory' and 'practice', and is built from ground-up knowledge in India and the Global South.
- **Comprehensive Learner Development Emphasising Life Skills and Ethical Values:** The University emphasises a conducive peer-learning environment under the supervision of faculty mentors, development of critical life skills (such as problem-solving, changemaking, teamwork, dignity of labour, effective communication and resilience), and a grounding in India's rich and diverse cultures.

Students at the University will benefit from an excellent research and knowledge ecosystem, developed over 16 years, by some of the world's leading scholars in areas such as sustainable development, governance, climate adaptation and mitigation, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity conservation and ecological restoration, infrastructure, buildings and housing, and economic development.

The University is an engaging, inclusive and intellectually stimulating environment where doctoral scholars participate in directing their own learning journeys, build a strong sense of community, and learn from the best international examples to shape the cities, towns, and villages of tomorrow.

Aromar Revi
Vice-Chancellor





DOCTORAL PROGRAMME IN
**URBAN STUDIES AND
PRACTICE**

III.1 DESCRIPTION

The Interdisciplinary PhD at the IIHS (Institution Deemed to be) University is a full-time, fully funded, coursework-based research programme that confers a doctoral degree in **Urban Studies and Practice**. The programme is designed to bring together a cohort of scholars interested in working across disciplines and professional sectors to shape sustainable and equitable futures. Departing from singular entry points, it is interested in fostering and generating scholarship on how the social, economic, spatial, ecological, political and institutional questions combine and are implicated in different ways within India's rural and urban transitions.

The programme encourages research across the spectrum of human settlements and linked social-ecological-technological systems across semi-wild through rural to the metropolitan, as well as across natural and built environments. It seeks to produce knowledge that is rooted in the realities and dynamics of Indian cities, towns, and villages and across diverse geographies and ecologies while drawing from knowledge across the Global South and North. It does so to create knowledge relevant to understanding and analysing Indian urban and rural transitions and enabling interdisciplinary research, practices, policies, and interventions towards sustainable and equitable outcomes.

III.2 THEMES

Led by faculty supervisors across the University's five interdisciplinary schools, the 2026-2027 PhD programme invites applications across a diverse set of research themes:

- Climate Resilient Development
- Climate Science
- Economic Transformations in Human Settlements
- Energy Transitions
- Environment, Ecology and Biodiversity
- Land, Housing and Tenurial Systems
- Natural Resource Governance
- Rural and Urban Transitions
- Social and Human Development
- Sustainability
- Systems, Complexity and Methods
- Urban and Regional Economic Development
- Urban Governance
- Urban Inequality
- Water and Aquatic systems
- Work, Labour and the Economy

The teaching and supervising faculty at the University have been trained in leading universities and institutes in India and abroad and are known for their cutting-edge research and policy-relevant practice. They encompass scholarship and knowledge generation that is rooted in the Global South, and is nationally and globally significant. Their work has informed leading international science-policy processes, and many serve on editorial boards of leading interdisciplinary journals.

III.3 CAREER PROSPECTS

1. **Academic careers:** As is common for recent PhD graduates, one key trajectory will be to both disciplinary and interdisciplinary Departments and Universities. Doctoral scholars from the University will have the advantage of being able to traverse multiple locations in a university setting, in:
 - Social Sciences: Urban Sociology and Anthropology, Economics, Urban Studies, Urban Politics, Geography, Political and Social Ecology
 - Urban Studies and Planning, Architecture, Urban Design, Conservation Planning, Landscape Ecology
 - Urban Sectoral Disciplines and Professional Streams: Planning, Public Policy, Infrastructure, Energy, Human Development, Economic Development, as well as Urban Ecology and Environment, Urban Climate Change
 - Public Policy, including Law, Politics, and Governance
 - Technology
 - Arts and Humanities: History, Philosophy, Cultural Studies, and Visual Studies
 - Ecology, Environment and Applied Climate Sciences, Restoration Ecology, Blue-green Infrastructures, and Nature-based Solutions
 - Sustainability Sciences and Climate Resilience in Food, Agricultural, and Water Systems
2. **Research careers:** It is expected that a large number of our graduates will work in senior positions in prominent Indian and global research institutions. Research careers in the biophysical and applied natural sciences will cover interdisciplinary research pathways in ecology, environment, and applied climate sciences.
3. **Policy and Practice careers:** Four main types of practice are imagined for Doctoral scholars. The first is work in public administration, public policy and the civil services. This will especially be true for practitioners who pursue a PhD with the University and will return to practice. The second kind is consulting and management roles with firms, consulting and advisory services on a diversity of topics covering rural, peri-urban and urban issues where their specialised knowledge and training will make them distinctive hires. The third is applied research and practice careers in think-tanks. The fourth is in knowledge-based start-ups and enterprises.

III.4 PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

The programme is designed to be completed in a maximum of five years with an ideal completion time of four years. The first two years are in-residence in Bengaluru and coursework based. Elements of the structure are described below.

A. Core Courses

Core courses must be taken by all PhD students across Years 1 and 2. These include:

- **Two core theory** courses that are taught collectively by multiple faculty in the first term. These are:
 - **Interdisciplinary approaches to Research and Practice I**, which introduces learners to a common, interdisciplinary conceptual vocabulary rooted in the realities of India's cities, towns, and villages
 - **Interdisciplinary approaches to Research and Practice II**, which traces conceptual links between theory and forms of practice, design, operation and implementation, with a focus on practice in India and the Global South
- **Pedagogy and Teaching:** A unique feature of the University's doctoral programme is a three-course module on pedagogy and teaching where scholars both learn pedagogical theory, as well as teach undergraduate and Master's students to prepare for a future professional life in academia.
- Courses on **Research Ethics** and **Research Design**
- **Doctoral Colloquia:** Student-led, reading-intensive seminars that prepare PhD scholars in the literature of their chosen research topic but also allow them to exchange and read across disciplines with the rest of their cohort

B. Core Methods Courses

In addition, there are specific **Core Courses in Methods** that are linked to the requirements of each scholar's research design. All PhD scholars must take **at least four** methods courses over the two years of coursework. Multiple forms of methods are offered, unrestricted to discipline, and scholars work with supervisors to find the right combination of methods courses to take in the first two years. Examples of Methods courses offered **only** for PhD students in 2026-2028 are:

- Academic Writing
- Advanced Ethnographic Methods
- Advanced Data Analytics
- Advanced Spatial and Temporal Analysis

In addition to these courses, PhD scholars will also be able to take Master's-level methods courses that are specialised to specific research fields.

C. Elective Courses

Starting from Term II of the first year, these courses allow PhD Scholars to build depth in their chosen research field in the form of elective courses that fit their own particular PhD trajectory. They also allow sufficient opportunity for interdisciplinary knowledge generation across a subset of research themes. PhD Scholars must take **seven elective courses** across the first two years, and these form the majority of their coursework. PhD scholars, in consultation with their Supervisor, can choose the right mix of elective courses, including a mix of Master's-level and Doctoral-level courses.

Examples of Doctoral-level elective courses offered for the 2026-2027 intake into the PhD programme are:

1. Global Environmental and Ecological Change
2. Climate, Technology and Society: Transitions and Transformations
3. Climate Action: Adaptation, Mitigation and Sustainable Development
4. Theory of Vulnerability Assessments: Models, Methods and Approaches
5. Sociological Approaches to Urban Development
6. Urban Inequalities: Theoretical and Structural Dimensions
7. Heterodox Foundations of Urban Economic Thought
8. Approaches to Urban Governance
9. Governing and Managing the Environment: Local to Global
10. Rural and Urban Transitions

There are **over forty elective courses** across the five Master's programmes that are available for PhD students to take for credit, should the applicant and Supervisor decide that these are relevant for the PhD journey.

D. Fieldwork and Dissertation Writing

Years 3 and 4 are dedicated for fieldwork, data collection and analysis, and dissertation writing. PhD Scholars will be in regular contact with their respective Research Advisory Committee during this time, including an annual review at the end of each year. Year 5 is used when this timeline is exceeded, but only with approval of the Committee.

IV. ● ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA, INTAKE, ADMISSION PROCESS, AND FUNDING FOR THE DOCTORAL PROGRAMME

IV.1 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR DOCTORAL PROGRAMME

Applicants must have completed a Master's degree programme from a recognised University at the stage of admission. The applicant must have achieved at least 55% marks in aggregate or its equivalent grade in a point scale wherever grading system is followed in the Master's Programme.

IV.2 INTAKE FOR DOCTORAL PROGRAMME: ACADEMIC YEAR 2026-2027

Doctoral Programme	Total
Doctoral Programme (PhD)	10

IV.3 ADMISSION PROCESS FOR DOCTORAL PROGRAMME

The admission process consists of a written application for all applicants, an online written entrance exam and an in-person interview for shortlisted applicants.

Written Application

A written application form shall be completed online. The application includes the following elements:

- i. Personal and Professional Details**
- ii. Writing Sample:** All applicants must share a sample of writing, ideally on the same broad subject as the proposed PhD, but it can also be on a different subject. Pieces published in both academic and non-academic venues are welcome. There is no prescribed length for the sample but if the sample is a dissertation or long monograph, it is advisable to select a chapter for submission
- iii. Published Writing (if applicable):** A list (citation only) of up to three pieces of published writing, as applicable. This is not mandatory
- iv. Supervisor Choice:** Applicants are expected to identify and list two potential Supervisors from the University for their work. In case they are unable to so identify, they may indicate that any of the supervisors recommended by the University is amenable to them
- v. Reference Letters:** Candidates must enter identification and contact information for **two academic or professional referees** who can write a letter of recommendation. The University will contact the referees directly and solicit letters. Candidates must inform referees in advance and seek their consent to have their contact information listed as referees

Please note that the submission of the above documents is mandatory within the assigned templates. Applications without these documents will not be considered further. **The form and required documents must be submitted on or before 27 April 2026.**

Applicants shall be assigned an application ID for the **online entrance examination to be held on 2 May 2026**. The time slot for this entrance exam shall be declared on the University website and communicated via email.

Please note the following stages below:

Stage 1: Written Entrance Exam

The online written entrance exam will consist of the following:

- Multiple choice questions testing both general logic and reading comprehension skills as well as advanced questions by topic
- Questions on thematic areas and research methods
- Research Proposal: Within a fixed word limit, applicants will be expected to describe their proposed Doctoral research with a focus on their research question, possible project and methods
- Intellectual statement: Within a fixed word limit, applicants will be expected to describe their motivation and preparation to pursue a Doctoral degree

A sample question paper is available on the University's website for reference purposes only.

Each applicant will be allocated a unique Application ID, and the responses will be anonymised and no name or identification information will be provided.

Stage 2: Interview

On the basis of the written entrance examination (as above), shortlisted applicants will be informed and asked to come to the IIHS Sadashivanagar Campus in Bengaluru for an in-person interview. A travel and accommodation support of INR 5,000 will be provided to outstation applicants.

Reference Letters: Applicants attending the interview are expected to ensure that the two academic or professional referees identified in the written application in Stage 1 have provided the supporting letters for recommendation before the applicants appear for the interview.

Final selection among the shortlisted applicants will be made on the scores of the written examination and interview evaluation. Selected final applicants will be made admission offers that will be confirmed after supporting documentation, transcripts and any other administrative requirements and checks are satisfactorily verified and completed.

Stage of Admission Process	Weightage
Written Application and Examination	70%
Interview	30%

Applicants who score less than 40% in either the written exam or the interview will not be considered for selection. Selected applicants will be made admission offers, that will be confirmed after supporting documentation, transcripts, and any other requirements and checks are satisfactorily verified and completed.

IV.3.A DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR ADMISSION TO DOCTORAL PROGRAMME

Applicants are required to upload the following documents in the admission application form on or before 27 April 2026. These documents will also be required at the time of confirmation of admission:

1. Statement of Marks of last qualifying examinations i.e. Postgraduate degree issued by recognised University
2. Degree certificate of last qualifying examination i.e. Postgraduate degree awarded by a recognised University
3. Degree certificate of Undergraduate degree awarded by a recognised University
4. Recent passport size photograph
5. Aadhaar Card, Driving Licence, Passport or any other proof of identity issued by Government authority

The University will not retain custody of the original academic and personal certificates submitted by applicants. These certificates will be used solely for physical verification of the self-attested copies, and will be returned to the applicants.

If at any stage of the admission process, an uploaded document is found to be fake, non-genuine, fabricated or misrepresented, the application will be rejected. If the same is found after the admission into the programme, the applicant's admission will be cancelled and appropriate legal action will be taken against them.

IV.3.B KEY DATES FOR DOCTORAL PROGRAMME

Event	Deadline
Online application opens	20 March 2026
Online application closes and supporting documents uploaded	27 April 2026
Online written exam	2 May 2026
Declaration of shortlisted applicants	5 June 2026
Interviews	3-4 July 2026
Offer of admission for PhD	10 July 2026
Acceptance of admission offer by applicant	24 July 2026
Final confirmed offer of admission	27 July 2026
Orientation and physical verification of original documents	24 August - 29 August 2026
Academic session begins	31 August 2026

IV.4 FUNDING FOR DOCTORAL PROGRAMME

The Doctoral Programme is fully funded and no tuition is charged to admitted students.

All admitted PhD scholars are supported with a stipend of INR 75,000 per month. The stipend is for four years, including breaks between terms, subject to the applicant clearing all internal reviews, examinations, and assessments as necessary. It can be extended to the fifth year if the Research Advisory Committee approves the extension on the submission of a viable completion plan for the fifth year.

The stipend is intended to cover all living expenses for the PhD scholar. Housing will not be provided separately, though PhD scholars are welcome to seek assistance from the University administration to identify housing options.









The UGC-approved IIHS (Institution Deemed to be) University, is offering a set of transformative new interdisciplinary degree programmes in 2026—five Master’s programmes and a Doctoral Programme—centred around urban practice and research.

As India undergoes the largest rural-to-urban transition in human history, urbanisation is fundamentally reshaping its economy, society, culture, and environment. Recognising this defining moment, the University is premised on the need to transform the current nature of urban education, one of the most important drivers for India’s national development and sustainable global futures.

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